

***DECEMBER 2011 WIND STORM  
AFTER ACTION REPORT/  
IMPROVEMENT PLAN***

***04/19/12***



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## **1. Executive Summary**

This After Action Report (AAR) highlights the disaster response efforts of 2-1-1 Los Angeles County in its coordination of disaster information call handling and its partnership with LA County OEM to gather disaster related damage reports from residents affected by the December 2011 windstorms. This AAR only covers actions taken by 2-1-1 LA County and lessons learned from the collaborative support process with LA County OEM. This AAR also offers specific recommendations for strengthening and improving preparedness, response, and recovery efforts essential to future 2-1-1 disaster operations.

On the evening of November 30<sup>th</sup>, a high wind warning was issued for the LA County area. The resulting windstorm caused widespread damage and power outages throughout the San Gabriel Valley and surrounding areas. As information on the damages became available and the County EOC began monitoring the situation, 2-1-1 LA County began gathering disaster information and providing relevant windstorm information to the public through the 2-1-1 number and its public webpage. 2-1-1 LA County continued to update and verify all subsequent storm damage information during the weeks after the storm.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, LA County OEM contacted 2-1-1 LA County and requested 2-1-1's assistance in gathering storm damage reports from the public. OEM issued a press release that day stating that the 2-1-1 LA County Disaster Hotline had been activated for residents to report their damages. 2-1-1 LA also added an intake section to their public web page for residents to report their damages online. During the period 12/05/11 to 01/20/12, 2-1-1 LA County gathered 1,073 damage reports for the county of LA.

The overall response effort was a successful joint operation between OEM and 2-1-1 LA County. The collaboration of these two organizations and the implementation of new operational procedures produced a number of noteworthy successes, but also revealed areas for improvement that require a more robust planning and implementations process, and the need for investment in the areas of service continuity and increased public access for disaster information and damage reporting.

## **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to detail 2-1-1 LA's response efforts and its assistance to OEM and the residents of LA County who were affected by the windstorm event. The report will detail operational elements along with providing examples of response efforts that may be classified as overall accomplishments or issues needing attention. Lastly, this report will offer recommendations for more effective protocols and improvements to logistical detail that can be incorporated into future planning efforts and for infrastructure improvements and enhancements

that can make 2-1-1 LA more resilient and capable of providing support to the public during and after disasters.

### **3. Incident Response and Management**

Upon receiving the request for damage report intake assistance from OEM, 2-1-1 LA contacted its Emergency Management Group personnel and immediately began planning efforts. 2-1-1 LA's first priority was to ramp up staffing operations and initiate training procedures for the new intake process. Staff received quick and intensive training on the damage report format and call handling procedures. In concert with the operational planning efforts, 2-1-1 IT staff created damage reporting intake tools and a data tracking process to generate reports for OEM.

2-1-1 LA County staff responded to the new task of damage report collection and the additional workload with professionalism and efficiency. Staffing systems already in place were quickly and efficiently adapted to respond to the additional number of calls.

### **4. Lessons Learned**

#### **4.1 Successes**

- 2-1-1 LA's excellent relationship and established communication channels with OEM facilitated the consistent delivery of emergency resource information from county emergency managers to 2-1-1 resource staff.
- 2-1-1 LA ramped up disaster operations quickly and was able to activate the 2-1-1 LA County Disaster Hotline and begin taking damage report calls within 6 hours of OEM's request.
- 2-1-1 LA developed electronic intake forms and data collection and reporting tools within 6 hours.
- 2-1-1 LA gathered and reported 1,073 damage reports from residents during a six week period.
- 2-1-1 LA and OEM were able to quickly develop the specific questions and inquiry format to be used for collecting damage reports from callers.
- 2-1-1 LA increased staff levels and completed staff training within 6 hours of OEM's request for assistance.
- 2-1-1 LA provided daily reports to OEM detailing specific damages of residents.
- 2-1-1 LA developed intake protocols and created damage report entry forms for the public to utilize on 2-1-1 LA's web page within 6 hours of the county's request. 2-1-1 LA's experience with reoccurring disasters in Southern California has helped it establish call data parameters for the collection and analysis of disaster information. Through this

direct experience, 2-1-1 LA eliminated the lengthy process of creating data reporting elements from square one.

- 2-1-1 LA's Community Liaison assisted OEM's PIO by conducting an interview with a mass media source in which the liaison provided all of the damage reporting information from OEM's press release.

## **4.2 Issues**

- OEM instructed 2-1-1 to inform callers that the County would be returning their calls within 24-48 hours. There were some instances where a second damage report was taken because there was no County response to the initial report within the stated time frame. A system should be developed where if a caller expresses concern over a lack of timely response then the call could be forwarded to OEM or other appropriate departments to prevent the taking of duplicate reports.
- OEM should provide a general informational script or FAQs sheet to assist 2-1-1 phone staff to explain to the callers why we are taking reports and how the caller is going to benefit. For example, some callers thought that by providing a damage report, they would receive money for repairs..
- During the initial phase of gathering damage information, OEM requested 2-1-1 to only take basic information from the callers, but a few days later OEM determined they needed homeowner/renter's insurance information. 2-1-1 staff then needed to call several hundred people back to obtain the additional insurance information.
- There was confusion over activating the disaster 1-800 hotline instead of only providing the 2-1-1 number for reporting damages. The benefit of utilizing 2-1-1 as a disaster information source is the opportunity to eliminate multiple phone numbers for gathering disaster resources by providing the public with one single number to call for all information. Promoting only the 2-1-1 number in press releases and public announcements would simplify the process of gathering or reporting disaster information for residents.
- The four day period of time between the actual storm and the activation of 2-1-1 LA as a damage reporting source was a missed opportunity for 2-1-1 LA to gather damage information from residents who may not have called in damages due to their repairing or already addressing their damaged property immediately following the storm.

## **5. Operational Recommendations**

- Activate 2-1-1 as a damage reporting resource as soon as possible after an event. This will help gather the most accurate information and total number of damage reports from residents.

- Utilize 2-1-1 as a damage report resource for both business entities and public institutions if they are not part of the normal chain of command in the county government's reporting process.
- Develop a predetermined set of questions for damage reports agreed upon by the county and 2-1-1 LA that could be entered into the 2-1-1 LA database ahead of time and easily activated once requested by the county.
- Add 2-1-1 LA's damage reporting capabilities to a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between OEM and 2-1-1 LA which would detail the additional services that 2-1-1 could provide LA County to supplement the disaster information services and reporting that are currently detailed in 2-1-1 LA's contract with the county.
- Distribute the 2-1-1 number as the only number for reporting damages, and eliminate the use of the 1-800 disaster line. Maintaining 2-1-1 as the one number to call will help solidify the 2-1-1 number in the minds of residents as the county source of public disaster information for all future disasters.

## 6. Funding Recommendations

- **Backup System - \$30,000**

2-1-1 LA County's expanding technology infrastructure has brought challenges to ensure critical data is backed up. Comprehensive data backup is the cornerstone to ensure continued operations even during the most severe disaster. Currently, 2-1-1 LA County backs data up to local backup servers but due to high volumes of data, it is difficult to store the data off site to ensure the data isn't lost should the main facility be damaged during a disaster. The solution is to store and transmit all backup data using specialized backup storage hardware at both 2-1-1 LA County sites satisfying the need for geographic redundancy for all backup sets as well as satisfy the need for large data stores for backup data.

- **Expanded Storage Space - \$40,000**

2-1-1 LA County is reaching the limits of the server storage space which limits the expandability of the system hinders the ability to adjust to increased demands during a disaster. In order to expand the infrastructure to handle higher demands due to increase call volume and disaster operations, additional storage space is required. Addition storage space will allow 2-1-1 LA County to deploy additional servers and hard drive space to compensate for additional demands.

- **Network Security Monitoring System - \$30,000**

Maintaining the security and confidentiality of sensitive information that is electronically stored on 2-1-1 LA County systems is a major priority. A single network security breach

could be severe enough to take the entire computer network which would dramatically halt operations. As 2-1-1 LA County's technology systems have grown over the years, the process for monitoring network security has become increasingly complex and a time consuming manual process that is not sustainable. There is too much information for IT staff to manually process and track potential security breaches. The large volume of network log traffic reduces their effectiveness in detecting a threat across the network. If any critical system is compromised, the confidentiality of caller, 2-1-1 LA County, and employee information may be seen by unauthorized persons. This system would allow IT staff to focus on day to day operations while the system analyzes the network and alerts for potential threats.

- **Application Monitoring - \$10,000**

2-1-1 LA County utilizes software to monitor and alert on the availability of its critical systems which includes the primary CRM tool. Current monitoring is limited to the server status and not the performance of the tools. Issues arise where the server is operational but a software failure causes the system to become unstable and perform poorly affecting the specialists' ability to make accurate referrals. The monitoring system software requested will allow IT staff to also monitor the performance of the critical systems and be alerted when they fall below a predetermined level. This will enable a swift response to potential problems which increase the stability of the environment, will limit impacts to service, and will ensure greater system availability during system issues.

- **Resource Database and Website Integration:**

The 2-1-1LA County resource database contains critical information on resources available to residents during a disaster. The database also holds disaster preparedness information, as well as mitigation resources needed before and after a disaster. The challenge is finding an effective vehicle to disseminate this information to the public as quickly and clearly as possible. 2-1-1 LA County currently provides disaster resource information either through the 2-1-1 phone number or by using a stripped down "i-frame" version of the database search application on 2-1-1 LA County's public website. The current website lacks user-friendliness and is limited with what types of information can be shown, thus reducing the site's effectiveness when people need it the most

In coordination with developing a brand new website, one of the highest priorities is providing quick and easy access to the resource database on the website, especially for emergency or disaster situations. To do so, the proposal is to integrate the new website with the resource database. This would effectively combine the easy-to-use and intuitive

design of the new website with the information rich content of the 2-1-1LA County resource database. This integration would maximize the benefit for the general public before, during, and after a disaster. Included below is the estimated cost breakdown for this project.

**2-1-1LinQ API integration with Website**

<b>Project Expense Area</b>	<b>Est. Hours</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>
Planning	40	\$75	\$3,000
Project Management	80	\$75	\$6,000
Programming API	200	\$150	\$30,000
Website Modification			
Programming	50	\$150	\$7,500
QA Testing	20	\$75	\$1,500
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$48,000</b>



## **Appendix A**

### **Damage Report Totals**

**December 5, 2011 through January 20, 2012**

<b>Month/Year</b>	<b>Caller Reports</b>	<b>Webpage Reports</b>	<b>Total</b>
December 2011	624	371	995
January 2012	57	21	78
<b>Total Reports</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>1,073</b>

## **Appendix B**

### **2-1-1 Los Angeles County Disaster Operations Overview**

2-1-1 Los Angeles County (2-1-1 LA) is a non-profit agency providing information and referral services for the residents of Los Angeles County. Under contract with Los Angeles County, 2-1-1 LA is also the public information source for the County in the event of a disaster or terrorist act. As a founding member of 2-1-1 California, 2-1-1 LA is active in statewide disaster response through its collaborative efforts with the 2-1-1 CA Emergency Network.

#### **Terrorist or Disaster Event Responsibilities**

- During disaster and emergency events, 2-1-1 is the public information source for Los Angeles County. Conservative estimate of 75,000 to 100,000 calls daily after a large scale disaster.
- 2-1-1 LA serves as: distributor of disaster-related information and rumor control to the public; distributor of LA County Department of Health advisories; and identifies unmet community needs for County officials.
- 2-1-1 LA relieves pressure on 911 and other first responder phone systems by providing an established number for individuals to call for non-life threatening situational information, particularly fire status, evacuation routes and status, road closures, shelter locations, and status of area reoccupations.
- 2-1-1 LA plays a significant role in disaster recovery by providing information and referrals to individuals for nonprofit and faith based agencies who offer long term assistance to disaster affected populations.

#### **Disaster Response Capabilities**

- Use of a Collocation with redundant servers and software.

- Remote laptops and VOIP technology allowing agents to work at home or at alternate facilities while still accessing 2-1-1 LA's complete disaster information database.
- Evacuation cell phone system to route calls while temporarily evacuated from building
- Fully integrated I&R software (2-1-1 LinQ) with designated disaster information database and rumor control/data reporting tools. Database is web accessible which allows any overflow call facility to remotely access all emergency information.
- T-1, cell, hard line, and multiple trunk lines for multiple telecommunication disaster recovery options.
- Web based call allocator system provides call routing capability from a remote location.
- Backup generator maintains essential functions during power outage
- Member of Los Angeles City and County alert notification systems for early warning status updates.